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LETTER DATED 17 MARCH 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 8 March 1999, which I have received from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

Annex

Letter dated 8 March 1999 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1088 (1996), I attach the monthly report on operations of the Stabilization Force. I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(Signed) Javier SOLANA

Enclosure

Monthly report to the Security Council on the operations of the Stabilization Force

1. Over the reporting period (20 January to 20 February 1999) there were approximately 31,500 troops deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, with contributions from all the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations and from 20 non-NATO countries.

2. The Stabilization Force (SFOR) continued to conduct surveillance and reconnaissance by means of ground and air patrols, with combat aircraft flying approximately 139 hours.

3. SFOR continues to monitor entity compliance with Security Council resolution 1160 (1998), which prohibits the transport of weapons into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, by inspecting Government-owned factories and weapon storage sites and by monitoring crossing points on the border with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. To date, no violations of Security Council resolution 1160 (1998) have been reported.

Cooperation and compliance by the parties

4. Over the reporting period, the parties remained substantially compliant with most military aspects of the Peace Agreement, and the situation in-theatre was relatively calm.

5. Over the reporting period, SFOR troops conducted a total of 329 weapon storage site inspections: 85 Bosniac; 65 Bosnian Croat; 135 Bosnian Serb; and 44 Federation. No major discrepancies were reported. To date, the Entity Armed Forces have closed 80 per cent (113 of 141) of those sites required to be closed or consolidated between 10 June 1998 and 28 February 1999.

6. SFOR monitored 537 training and movement activities: 75 Bosniac; 10 Bosnian Croat; 274 Bosnian Serb; and 178 Federation. Training and movement bans were imposed on the 11th Signal Battalion of the 1st Bosnian Serb Army Corps from 4 to 25 January 1999, and on the 302nd Armoured Brigade of the 3rd Bosnian Serb Army Corps because of non-compliance with regard to their training on the Manjaca Range. In addition, the Republika Srpska Police Anti-Terrorist Brigade remains under the movement and training ban imposed in August 1997.

7. SFOR troops continued to support the United Nations International Police Task Force (IPTF) by providing security for the latter's inspection of local police stations and in monitoring possible restrictions on freedom of movement. In this regard, on 23 January, SFOR troops monitored the removal of a roadblock which had been set up by Croatian police on the road leading to Licka Kaldrma, near the disputed border area of Martin Brod.

8. SFOR troops also supported IPTF in conducting two prison inspections, in Zenica and Tuzla (Multi-National Division North), at the beginning of February. The inspection of the Zenica prison resulted in the confiscation and subsequent

destruction by SFOR of 114 rifles and 94 pistols, which were being held in excess of authorized limits.

9. Entity Armed Forces demining teams continued to conduct counter-mine support operations, which included training, equipment maintenance, reduction in field fortifications and landmine stockpiles and other related activities. On 15 February, despite the adverse weather conditions, seven demining teams started mine-clearance operations.

Cooperation with international organizations

10. Within its capabilities and in accordance with its mandate, SFOR continues to provide assistance to the international institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including IPTF, the Office of the High Representative, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

11. SFOR continues to provide support to the Office of the High Representative in its efforts to open airfields and to expand civil air operations. In this regard, SFOR issued a "letter of exception" permitting the overnight parking of aircraft at Mostar airport, thereby increasing the potential number of flights available.

12. SFOR also continues to play an active role in supporting the Office of the High Representative's efforts to establish joint institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One such key institution, the Standing Committee on Military Matters, met twice during the period, on 2 and 18 February. The first meeting resulted in an agreement on procedures governing the composition of a State-level delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the article V arms control talks in Vienna. The second meeting of the Standing Committee on Military Matters, which was a special session, was held on 18 February and was attended by the NATO Secretary-General and by the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. Addressing the Committee, the Secretary-General encouraged the parties to take concrete steps to fulfil their obligations under the terms of the Peace Agreement and of the Madrid Peace Implementation Council Declaration of December 1998.

Outlook

13. Isolated acts of intimidation and violence are likely to continue as a result of the return of refugees and displaced persons. The forthcoming announcements on the arbitration decision on Brcko is also likely to present potential security challenges.